CLAIMS

We claim:

1. With respect to a voice mail message that has been retrieved by a subscriber in a communication from the subscriber (the subscriber's communication) to a voice mail system (VMS), a method for enabling the subscriber to make a reply call to the voice mail message without the VMS being involved in the reply call, comprising:

A. receiving a message indicating a release of the subscriber's communication by the VMS, the message also indicating at least a telephone number (reply telephone number) to which the reply call is to be directed;

B. causing the subscriber's communication to be terminated to an intelligent network element (INE), and the INE being provided with the reply telephone number;

C. in response to the termination of the subscriber's communication to the INE, causing the INE to initiate a call to the reply telephone number, and to bridge the subscriber's communication and the call to form the reply call,

whereby the subscriber makes the reply call to the voice mail message without the VMS being involved in the reply call through the subscriber's communication to the VMS being routed to the INE and the subscriber's communication being bridged by the INE with the call from the INE to the reply telephone number.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:

in response to receipt of the message in action A, causing the subscriber's communication be routed to a directory number of the subscriber (subscriber's directory number);

in response to routing of the subscriber's communication to the subscriber's directory number, receiving a query for instructions with respect to the subscriber's communication; and

wherein action B follows in response to the query,

whereby the subscriber's communication is routed first to the subscriber's directory number prior to being routed to the INE.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein the message comprises a remote operations (RO) parameter including the reply telephone number, and an identifier for a reply call.

4. The method of Claim 2, wherein the message comprises a remote operations (RO) parameter including the reply telephone number, an identifier for a reply call, and the subscriber's directory number.

5. The method of Claim 3 or Claim 4, wherein the message comprises a GR-1129 message comprising the RO parameter.

6. With respect to a voice mail message that has been retrieved by a subscriber in a communication from the subscriber (the subscriber's communication) to a voice mail system (VMS), a system for enabling the subscriber to make a reply call to the voice mail message without the VMS being involved in the reply call, comprising:

A. the VMS being operative to transmit a message indicating a release of the subscriber's communication by the VMS, the message also indicating at least a telephone number (reply telephone number) to which the reply call is to be directed;

B. a service control point (SCP) operative to receive the message, and to cause the subscriber's communication to be terminated to an intelligent network element (INE) with the INE being provided with the reply telephone number; and

C. the INE being operative, in response to termination of the subscriber's communication to the INE, to initiate a call to the reply telephone number, and to bridge the subscriber's communication and the call to form the reply call,

whereby the subscriber makes the reply call to the voice mail message without the VMS being involved in the reply call through the subscriber's communication to the VMS being routed to the INE and the subscriber's communication being bridged by the INE with the call from the INE to the reply telephone number.

7. The system of Claim 6, wherein the SCP is further operative, in response to receipt of the message, to cause the subscriber's communication to be routed to a directory number of the subscriber (subscriber's directory number); and

further comprising:

a service switching point (SSP) serving the directory number of the subscriber, the SSP being operative, in response to routing of the subscriber's communication to the subscriber's directory number, to query the SCP for instructions with respect to the subscriber's communication; and

wherein the SCP is operative to cause the subscriber's communication to be terminated to the INE with the INE being provided with the reply telephone number,

whereby the subscriber's communication is routed first to the subscriber's directory number prior to being routed to the INE.

8. The system of Claim 6, further comprising:

a service switching point serving the VMS (SSP of VMS) and being operative to receive the message from the VMS and to transmit the message to the SCP; and

the SCP being further operative to receive the message from the SSP of VMS.

9. The system of Claim 6, wherein the message comprises a remote operations (RO) parameter including the reply telephone number, and an identifier for a reply call.

10. The method of Claim 7, wherein the message comprises a remote operations (RO) parameter including the reply telephone number, an identifier for a reply call, and the subscriber's directory number.

11. The method of Claim 9 or Claim 10, wherein the message comprises a GR-1129 message comprising the RO parameter.

12. With respect to a reply call of a subscriber replying to a voice mail message left for the subscriber on a voice mail system (VMS), the reply call being formed by a bridge including (1) a communication dialed by the subscriber to retrieve the voice mail message ("subscriber's communication"), and (2) a call to a telephone number associated with the voice mail message as a number from which the voice mail message originated ("reply telephone number"), a method to connect the subscriber to the VMS for interaction with the VMS after disconnection of the reply call, the method comprising:

A. monitoring the reply call for a disconnect signal; and

B. in response to the disconnect signal,

i. dismantling the bridge so as to disconnect the call to the reply telephone number, and

ii. transmitting the subscriber's communication to the VMS,

whereby the subscriber may be connected for interaction with the VMS after the disconnection of the reply call.

13. The method of Claim 12, further comprising:

prior to transmitting the subscriber's communication to the VMS, obtaining instructions with respect to the subscriber's communication, and following the instructions in transmitting the subscriber's communication to the VMS.

14. With respect to a reply call of a subscriber replying to a voice mail message left for the subscriber on a voice mail system (VMS), the reply call being formed by a bridge at an intelligent network element (INE), the bridge including (1) a communication dialed by the subscriber to retrieve the voice mail message ("subscriber's communication"), and (2) a call from the INE to a telephone number associated with the voice mail message as a number from which the voice mail message originated ("reply telephone number"), a system to connect the subscriber to the VMS for interaction with the VMS after disconnection of the reply call, the system comprising:

the INE operative to monitor the reply call for a disconnect signal, and in response to the disconnect signal, to dismantle the bridge so as to disconnect the call to the reply telephone number; and

a service switching point (SSP) serving the INE, the SSP being operative in response to the disconnection of the reply call to transmit the subscriber's communication to the VMS,

whereby the subscriber may be connected for interaction with the VMS at the disconnection of the reply call.

15. The system of Claim 14, further comprising:

a service control point (SCP); and

wherein the SSP is operative, prior to transmitting the subscriber's communication to the VMS, to obtain instructions with respect to the subscriber's communication, and following the instructions in transmitting the subscriber's communication to the VMS.

16. With respect to a reply call of a subscriber replying to a voice mail message left for the subscriber on a voice mail system (VMS), the reply call being formed by a bridge at an intelligent network element (INE), the bridge including (1) a communication dialed by the subscriber to retrieve the voice mail message ("subscriber's communication"), and (2) a call from the INE to a telephone number associated with the voice mail message as a number from which the voice mail message originated ("reply telephone number"), a method to connect the subscriber to the VMS for interaction with the VMS after disconnection of the reply call, the method comprising:

receiving a message with respect to the disconnection of the reply call; and

in response to receiving the message, causing the subscriber's communication to be routed to the VMS so that the subscriber's communication follows a path from the subscriber to the VMS and the subscriber may interact with the VMS.